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31 October 2016

Mr Daniel Hartley
Abbey View School
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Dear Mr Hartley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Abbey View School

Following my visit to your school on 12 October 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection. Please also pass my thanks on to the pupils and staff, and to the governor I met, for making me welcome.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

You took up your post as headteacher in September 2015. The first monitoring inspection took place in January 2016 and judged that effective action was being taken, but that progress was slow as you established more precisely what needed to be done to improve the quality of education. Since then the pace of improvement has increased significantly. All of the areas for improvement identified in the May 2015 inspection report, and those raised in the first monitoring visit letter, have been addressed effectively. The impact of the actions you and governors have taken is clear. The action plans to bring about further improvement are matched well to the school's current stage of development.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and a member of the governing body. We discussed your analysis of pupils' attendance, achievement and other

performance information and looked at some pupils' records. We visited classrooms together and talked to pupils and their teachers about their work and the progress that they have made since joining the school. I also talked to pupils informally during the morning break as they, and I, enjoyed tea, toast and crumpets. The school's self-evaluation and improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing in this small, alternative provision free school since the first monitoring inspection in January 2016. Abbey View School continues to take pupils from the three commissioning schools in the CCT Learning trust (Chipping Campden School, Cleeve School and Tewkesbury School), as well as from an increasing number of other secondary schools in Gloucestershire.

Following the first monitoring inspection, you have been working with The Mulberry Bush, who run a special school for vulnerable children and provide training for professionals in behaviour support and how to teach and manage pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties.

At the time of this visit there were 22 pupils in the school; 12 are in Year 11. The school population changes as pupils join and leave on placements of varying lengths. Pupils currently in Year 11 will stay until they leave school after taking GCSE examinations at the end of this academic year.

Main findings

Since the first monitoring visit, the work you and your staff have done, supported well by governors, has enabled the school to successfully meet its core aim to prepare pupils well for reintegration into their mainstream school, transfer to more suitable specialist provision or to post-16 courses, training or an apprenticeship. The high quality of the attention given to the particular circumstances of each pupil is essential to this success.

Very careful analysis allows you to tailor the support and learning programme to the individual needs of pupils, to improve their academic skills and also their personal development, well-being, welfare and safety. One key strength is the quality and frequency of dialogue with pupils, parents and the commissioning school when making decisions about pupils' education and support. Parents are extremely positive about how well the school supports their children. You have built a strong team of staff with a very good breadth of expertise so that you can support the widely diverse needs of all pupils. You and your staff can be proud of the way you are turning around the lives of some highly vulnerable young people.

Behaviour has dramatically improved since the first monitoring visit. The school is much calmer and more well-ordered than in January 2016. During lessons, pupils are in classrooms and working independently with confidence and they are making good progress. Any minor incidents of misbehaviour that arise in social time

between lessons are dealt with effectively and pupils settle to learning quickly when they are back in class. Year 11 pupils' work, as seen in art and mathematics, is of a high quality. Their gains in learning are impressive given pupils' lack of achievement at the time they joined the school. There is a noticeable increase in pupils' self-esteem and pride in themselves and in their work.

Staff have much more confidence and, as a result, teaching is now predominantly good. Relationships with pupils are much stronger and teachers are able to provide secure and welcoming learning environments that promote improved respect and tolerance between pupils and staff. Incidents of poor behaviour, and time lost to exclusions, have reduced markedly. As a result of much improved behaviour, teachers are setting higher expectations and pupils are making much better progress than previously.

Pupils' attendance overall has improved markedly. When compared with their previous record, the attendance of the majority of individual pupils improves when they join the school. The most recent analysis shows that more than 80% of pupils had improved their attendance significantly and more than 90% of pupils have good attendance.

You maintain detailed and accurate records for each pupil. They provide clarity about the reasons for the pupils joining Abbey View School, the outcome of initial assessment and the progress that they make. You provide very useful reports for those pupils who return to their own school with good follow-up, at fixed times, to test the effectiveness of the work you did with them. These records provide good evidence of the effectiveness of the support you and your staff provide for pupils. The flow of information between you and commissioning schools has improved, although you recognise that there is still some inconsistency in the timeliness and quality of the information you receive. I am pleased that commissioning schools recognise the value of the advice you provide when pupils return, particularly about the strategies that have been successful in supporting that pupil, so that they can continue to make an impact in the future.

All of the headline data on, for example, pupils' progress, attendance and destinations shows the clear impact of the actions you have taken. All show a good trend of improvement. Data is backed up by strong anecdotal information about the stories of individual pupils' success when they leave school. You and governors now have a clear set of indicators of success that focus not just on pupils' achievement but on improvements in their attendance, attitudes, behaviour, social and emotional development, and self-esteem that enable them to learn effectively and to prepare for their next steps in their education, training or employment. You and your governors are currently usefully working on how to evaluate the success of the school at a level between the headline data and the records of individual pupils' progress. This will enable you and governors to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of further improvements more robustly.

External support

The support from The Mulberry Bush has been effective. It has given you an excellent opportunity to have a professional dialogue to test out your own ideas and learn from others. This has helped provide the confidence and affirmation that you were taking the right actions to remedy weaknesses quickly. The training they have provided has also improved staff confidence, raised teacher expectations and improved the quality of their teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Gloucestershire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector